



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 106th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 146

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2000

No. 116

House of Representatives

The House met at 9 a.m.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Lundregan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed with an amendment in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 4864. An act to amend title 38, United States Code, to reaffirm and clarify the duty of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to assist claimants for benefits under laws administered by the Secretary, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed a bill of the following title in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 2796. An act to provide for the conservation and development of water and related resources, to authorize the Secretary of the Army to construct various projects for improvements to rivers and harbors of the United States, and for other purposes.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 19, 1999, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 25 minutes, and each Member except the majority leader, the minority leader or the minority whip limited to not to exceed 5 minutes, but in no event shall continue beyond 9:50 a.m.

CONTROLLING GUN VIOLENCE IN OUR COMMUNITIES

The SPEAKER. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, my goal in Congress has been to make the Federal Government a better partner, working with people back home to make our communities more livable, our families safer, healthier, and more economically secure. An important step towards that goal would be to reduce the threat of gun violence in our communities.

In no developed country in the world are families at greater risk of gun violence than in the United States. Why is this? I think that one of the problems is that the sheer magnitude and terrible frequency of gun violence has numbed the American public. It is hard to grasp the enormity of more than 12 children a day killed, the equivalent of a Columbine High School massacre just scattered around the country.

Part of our task must be to put a human face on those tragedies and then to propose simple, common sense steps to reduce gun violence.

My first experience with this tragedy involved a high school friend. Bob Boothman was one of five kids. He was sandwiched between two older twin sisters and two younger twins, a brother and a sister, a couple of years younger. The Boothman family was a place where people gravitated. It was warm and loving, lots of activity, friendly, full of life.

Then, one night in the fall of 1969, as Bob was driving home, things were turned upside down for that family. Someone in a car driving in the other direction fired a random shot that killed Bob. Bob, the student body officer, the boyfriend, the son, the brother, the trusted employee.

Life did go on for the Boothman family, their children, and today, their grandchildren. Yet, nothing quite filled the void of having lost this terrific young man. It was not just Bob that was the victim, but his parents, sisters, brother, friends. They were all victims of that violence, changing their lives forever.

Mr. Speaker, I share this painful memory not because we should dwell on these losses, but because they should inspire us to take steps to protect families in the future.

About the time that Bob lost his life, America declared war on drunk driving and death on our highways. Our battle for highway safety was enormously successful. We have cut the fatality rate in half by a series of simple common sense reforms. So too, we can launch a similar effort to protect Americans against gun violence. We can take simple, common sense steps, keeping guns out of the hands of more people with a pattern of reckless and dangerous behavior, treating the gun like the dangerous product that it is, making it harder for children to obtain and use them, cutting down on illegal sales and distribution.

Sadly, this Congress has been paralyzed by extremists on the issue of gun violence, and the Republican leadership has refused to even allow the conference committee on the Juvenile Justice bill to meet for 14 months to consider the Senate-approved gun amendments. They have not met since August of last year.

Luckily, in my State of Oregon, in November, we can vote for Measure 5, which would close the gun show loophole, a small, but significant step to make sure that all gun purchasers are subjected to background checks, to maybe help break the log jam here in Congress.

Mr. Speaker, Bob Boothman died on a cold November night in 1969. Since then, over 1 million Americans have lost their lives to gun violence, more than all of the Americans who have been killed in gun violence in war from the Civil War to this date. We as a Nation have celebrated the sacrifice of those million war dead; and we have worked to minimize, to prevent future conflicts and loss of life. So too, we need to memorialize the victims of gun

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



Printed on recycled paper.

H8063